**SCHOLAR-ACTIVIST JOANNA KUSIAK WINS $100,000 NINE DOTS PRIZE**

The Cambridge-based researcher and scholar-activist Joanna Kusiak has been announced as the winner of the 2022/23 Nine Dots Prize, receiving US$100,000 and a book deal with Cambridge University Press for her ‘exciting’ and ‘provocative’ response to the question ‘Why has the rule of law become so fragile?’

The Nine Dots Prize is a prize for a book that has not yet been written. Every two years, its Board sets a question and invites people to respond with a 3,000-word essay and a book proposal. The winner receives US$100,000, which enables them to spend time researching, developing their ideas, and turning their essay response into a full-length book which is published by Cambridge University Press.

Close to 600 potential books were submitted in response to the 2022/23 question, from over 50 different countries around the world. They were judged anonymously by the Prize’s board of leading academics, journalists and thinkers.

Kusiak’s winning essay argued that the rule of law has always been fragile, a result of its paradoxical foundations which bind together law and politics. Taking the case of the 2021 Berlin referendum, in which voters decided to expropriate more than 240,000 properties from corporate landlords into public ownership, Kusiak demonstrates the potential of *radically legal* politics as a path to deepen our democracies and renew the rule of law.

Kusiak will develop her response into a book, to be published in 2024 by Cambridge University Press. In her book, she will explore the following:

* The story of the Berlin movement and its daring attempt to take housing back from corporations, leveraging the German constitution.
* The relationship between law and justice, and the misuse of the law by powerful forces including financial capitalism.
* How Jungian psychoanalysis can reveal the rule of law’s ‘midlife crisis’, presenting politics as the ‘shadow’ of the law.
* The tension between private law and Germany’s constitution, which protects fundamental rights over the needs of any economic system.
* How *radically legal* tactics can redirect the conservative nature of the law towards a progressive future, achieving progressive change within and beyond the law.
* Kusiak’s personal experience as a scholar-activist working in Berlin and Warsaw to contribute to the development of progressive social movements.
* What Berlin could look like through deprivatising housing – an inclusive vision of a liveable city that unlocks creativity and freedom.

Nine Dots Prize board member and judge Professor David Runciman said of Kusiak’s winning entry:

“What’s so exciting about this proposal from a new voice is the way it mixes the urgency of contemporary politics with the complexity of recent history. Nowhere has the rule of law been subject to more violently different interpretations than in Berlin over the last century. This exploration of the fight over property rights in the city uses the past to illuminate the present and uses the present to suggest an alternative future. Not everyone will agree with what’s in this book, but it is sure to provoke fierce argument, which is what the Nine Dots Prize is for.”

Nine Dots Prize 2022/23 winner Dr Joanna Kusiak said:

“The rule of law promises that all people are free and equal, yet too often it fails to deliver on its promise, getting entangled by power. My book, provisionally titled *Radically Legal*, showcases how social movements in Berlin and Warsaw work with the law to renew its emancipatory potential. My proposal was the work of love, and I feel elevated by winning the Nine Dots Prize. I am a scholar-activist, which means that I only engage with the topics that I believe are socially important.”

**Dr Joanna Kusiak** is a scholar-activist who lives in Berlin and works at the University of Cambridge. Born in Poland, she has been equally shaped by the emancipatory tradition of the Solidarność movement and by the brutality of the neoliberal transformation. Her work focuses on urban land, housing crises, and the progressive potential of law. In 2021 she was one of the spokespeople of Deutsche Wohnen & Co enteignen, Berlin’s successful referendum campaign to expropriate stock-listed landlords. She also writes and performs poetry.

As part of the prize win, Kusiak is invited to spend a term at the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), Cambridge University. Her book will be published by Cambridge University Press in May 2024 in a variety of formats, including open access, meaning the book can be downloaded free of charge.

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For further information and interviews with Joanna Kusiak and/or individual Board members, please contact James Douglas at Riot Communications on:+44 (0)7591 020 438 james@riotcommunications.com

1. **About the Nine Dots Prize**

The Nine Dots Prize is a prize for creative thinking that tackles contemporary societal issues. Its heartland is in the analysis of contemporary society and societal challenges, and it welcomes responses that draw on any perspective and discipline. Entrants are challenged to submit 3,000-word responses to a question set by the Board. The question for the fourth cycle was ‘Why has the rule of law become so fragile?’ The winner receives US$100,000, which will support them to write a short book expanding on their ideas to be published by Cambridge University Press in a variety of formats, including open access, meaning the book can be downloaded free of charge.

The Nine Dots Prize is judged anonymously and funded by the Kadas Prize Foundation, an English registered charity established to fund research into significant but neglected questions relevant to today’s world. Its name references a lateral thinking puzzle that can only be solved by drawing outside of a box of nine dots arranged in three rows of three. It is supported by Cambridge University Press and the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH), both departments of the University of Cambridge.

Further information can be found at [www.ninedotsprize.org](http://www.ninedotsprize.org)

1. **About the Kadas Prize Foundation**

The Kadas Prize Foundation was established to fund research into significant but neglected questions relevant to today’s world. Its main charitable activity is as a prize-awarding body, enabling Prize winners to further their work in the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences to the benefit of the public. The Foundation was established by Peter Kadas, who has worked around the world for a number of leading institutions. Originally from Hungary, he holds Canadian and UK citizenship and currently lives in Barcelona, where he is a Senior Adviser at BXR Corporate Consulting Partners SL, which is an adviser to investment group BXR Group.

1. **About the Board**

The Nine Dots Prize Board is composed of 12 internationally recognised and distinguished academics, authors, journalists and thinkers. They are:

* **Yevgenia Albats** – Distinguished Journalist in Residence at New York University’s Jordan Centre, former Editor in Chief and CEO of the Moscow-based political weekly *The New Times* and author of *The State Within A State: KGB and Its Hold on Russia*
* **Professor Anne Applebaum** – Journalist at *The Atlantic,* Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and Professor of Practice, Institute of Global Affairs, LSE
* **Urvashi Butalia** – Director, Founder and CEO of Zubaan Books (tongue, voice, language), an imprint of Kali, the leading publisher of women’s writing in India, and award-winning author
* **Petina Gappah** – Zimbabwean lawyer and writer. Currently the Principal Legal Advisor to the Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area
* **Professor Simon Goldhill (Chair)** – Professor in Greek Literature and Culture and Fellow of King's College, University of Cambridge
* **Professor J. Jarpa Dawuni** – Associate Professor of Political Science at Howard University, Washington D.C., and a qualified Barrister-at-Law before the Superior Courts of Ghana
* **Peter Kadas** – Director of the Kadas Prize Foundation
* **Professor Roger Martin** – Professor Emeritus of the Martin Prosperity Institute and the Michael Lee-Chin Family Institute for Corporate Citizenship at the Rotman School of Management
* **Milica Momcilovic** – President of the World Federation of Science Journalists and editor of the Science Program at Radio Television of Serbia
* **Professor Joanna Page** – Professor of Latin American Studies and Director of the Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (CRASSH) at the University of Cambridge
* **Professor Riccardo Rebonato** – Professor of Finance at EDHEC Business School, formerly Global Head of Rates and FX Research at PIMCO
* **Professor David Runciman** – Professor of Politics at the University of Cambridge and presenter of the Past, Present and Future podcast.
1. **Past winners**
* **The 2016/17 Nine Dots Prize** was won by former Google employee turned Oxford philosopher, **James Williams**, who submitted the best response to the question ‘Are digital technologies making politics impossible?’ The resulting book, *Stand Out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy*, was published in May 2018 to critical acclaim (‘A landmark book’ – *the Observer*; ‘Switch off your smartphone, slouch in a comfy chair, and pay your full, undivided, attention to this short, absorbing, and deeply disturbing book’ – *Financial Times*). It was chosen as Princeton University’s 2019 Pre-read and sent to all incoming students as an introduction to intellectual life at Princeton.
* **The 2018/19 Nine Dots Prize** was won by Mumbai-based writer **Annie Zaidi**, who submitted a ‘powerful’ and ‘unique’ response to the question ‘Is there still no place like home?’ The resulting book, *Bread, Cement, Cactus: A Memoir of Belonging and Dislocation,* explores notions of home and belonging rooted in Zaidi’s experiences of life in India. It was described by *the Observer* as a ‘compelling exploration of the intimate and political sides of an itinerant life’.
* **The 2020/21 Nine Dots** **Prize** was won by Berlin-based journalist **Trish Lorenz**, who submitted the winning response to the question, ‘What does it mean to be young in an ageing world?’ In her book, *Soro Soke: The Young Disruptors of an African Megacity*, published in May 2022, Lorenz documents the lives, ambitions, challenges and concerns of young people living in the Nigerian metropole.  Author Chibundu Onuzo said, ‘Trish Lorenz has done an excellent job of collating the hopes, dreams and frustrations of the young people of Lagos.’